

## Message Text

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PAGE 01 FREETO 01339 271201Z  
ACTION AF-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-10  
L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 SP-02 SS-15 ICA-11  
/064 W

-----068599 280541Z /21

R 271100Z APR 78  
FM AMEMBASSY FREETOWN  
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7575  
INFO AMEMBASSY CONAKRY  
AMEMBASSY MONROVIA

C O N F I D E N T I A L FREETOWN 1339

EO 11652: GDS  
TAGS: PINT, SL  
SUBJECT: APPROACHING A ONE-PARTY STATE

1. SUMMARY: DURING THE PERIOD APRIL 19-26 SIERRA LEONE CELEBRATED ITS SEVENTH ANNIVERSARY AS A REPUBLIC AS WELL AS TEN YEARS OF ALL PEOPLES CONGRESS (APC) RULE. RUMORS THAT PRESIDENT STEVENS WOULD DECLARE A ONE-PARTY STATE, SOMETHING WHICH HAS BEEN IN THE WORKS FOR NEARLY A YEAR, REDOUBLED. THE PRESIDENT APPEARS TO BE TAKING HIS TIME IN THE PROCESS, ONE, IT APPEARS, WHICH WILL INVOLVE A NATIONAL REFERENDUM AND ONE, IT IS SAID, WHICH IS CAUSING INTRA-PARTY STRIFE.

2. I ASKED ACTING FOREIGN MINISTER HARRY WILLIAMS APRIL 24 WHAT WAS HAPPENING IN REGARD TO THE ONE -PARTY STATE THE PRESIDENT HAD CALLED FOR SOME TIME AGO AND WHICH HAD BEEN IN THE NEWS FREQUENTLY SINCE. WILLIAMS SAID THAT THE PRESIDENT DID NOT WISH TO FORCE A ONE-PARTY STATE ON SIERRA LEONE AND WAS SEEKING A GENUINE EXPRESSION OF THE PEOPLE'S WILL. HE ADDED THAT IN SPITE OF CALLS FOR A ONE-PARTY STATE FROM EVERY SECTION OF THE COUNTRY, THE PRESIDENT WISHED TO MAKE SURE. WILLIAMS INDICATED THAT A CABINET SUB-COMMITTEE IS STUDYING THE CONSTITUTIONAL QUESTIONS INVOLVED AND THAT, IN ANY EVENT, A REFERENDUM WOULD BE  
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CALLED FOR SO THAT THE PEOPLE "ONCE AGAIN" COULD EXPRESS THEIR WILL.

3. LATER THE SAME DAY DEPARTING NIGERIAN HIGH COMMISSIONER OLAITAN NOTED THAT HE, TOO, HAD HEARD THAT A REFERENDUM ON THE ISSUE WOULD TAKE PLACE. OLAITAN, WHO IS QUITE WELL CONNECTED HERE, SAID THAT THE REAL REASON FOR THE DELAY (SINCE THE ONE

PARTY STATE WAS CALLED FOR LAST MAY) IS THAT THERE IS SERIOUS DISAGREEMENT BETWEEN THE PRESIDENT AND THE VICE PRESIDENT AS TO HOW THE STATE SHOULD BE ORGANIZED AFTER THE ONE-PARTY STATE IS ESTABLISHED. OLAITAN SAID THE PROBLEM STEMMED FROM THE DESIRE OF THE PRESIDENT TO HAVE ALL POWER IN HIS OWN HANDS.

4. ANOTHER AND SEEMINGLY MORE PLAUSIBLE EXPLANATION OF THE DISAGREEMENT CAME TO MY ATTENTION TODAY. ACCORDING TO THIS VERSION THE PRESIDENT IS SEEKING TO ADOPT THE OPPOSIT8ON SLPP

MEMBERS INTO HIS ONE-PARTY STATE AND FOR THAT REASON WISHES TO OFFER THE VICE PRESIDENCY TO AN SLPP MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT. VICE PRESIDENT KOROMA'S PRICE FOR GIVING UP THE POSITION IS SUPPOSEDLY \$2 MILLION. THE LATTER MAY BE FANCIFUL BUT THE SUGGESTION THAT THE PRESIDENT WOULD LIKE TO BRING OPPOSITION LEADERS INTO HIGH POSITIONS IN A NEW GOVERNMENT MAKES SENSE.

5. ON APRIL 25, DURING A MEETING WITH PRESIDENT STEVENS, I ASKED HIM HOW HE VIEWED MOVES TOWARD A ONE-PARTY STATE. UNFORTUNATELY HE GAVE ME NO INDICATION OF HIS SCHEDULING PLANS (IF HE HAS THAT YET) BUT RATHER DWELLED ON THE REASONS SIERRA LEONE NEEDS A ONE-PARTY STATE: CREOLE DOMINANCE ("THREE-QUARTERS OF OUR HIGH COURT JUSTICES ARE CREOLE"), ILLITERARY (THE PEOPLE DON'T UNDERSTAND MULTI-PARTY POLITICS) AND TRIBAL DIFFERENCES AND ANIMOSITIES.

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6. IT SEEMS CLEAR THAT PRESIDENT STEVENS REMAINS DETERMINED TC ESTABLISH A ONE-PARTY STATE. THE WAY TO ITS ESTABLISHMENT IS NOT YET CLEAR, HOWEVER, ASIDE FROM ANY CONSTITUTIONWA PROBLEMS WHICH WILL HAVE TO BE OVERCOME OR IGNORED, THE LATTER AN UNLIKELY PROCESS.  
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## Message Attributes

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**Decaption Date:** 01 jan 1960  
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